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The Spreading Circle of Campus Terror

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Cover: Harvard "strike" symbol drawn by Robert Lawrence. Inside front cover: free thought at the American University, circa 1984 (courtesy, Students for a Democratic Society, etc.).

[This month's article diverges from our standard policy of providing readers with intellectual background needed for a general understanding of the subject. Readers can obtain an excellent presentation of supporting philosophical framework in Ayn Rand's Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, chapter 22. "No One To Stop Them" will appear in revised form in a forthcoming book on student terrorism: The University Under Siege.]

NO ONE TO STOP THEM

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Student terrorists have succeeded in bringing down campus after campus in much the same way that any random collection of gas and dust rushes in to fill a vacuum: by default. For decades, the American university has been in a state of virtual philosophical bankruptcy. Eventually an accounting had to come. And it has, in the form of gun-toting, slogan-chanting leftists who, swooping down on universities like vultures, plan to use the charred remains, the burned-out libraries and lifeless classrooms, as revolutionary staging grounds.

Numerous administrators and professors have displayed shocked disbelief at the "activists'" escalating vulgarity and cruelty. But they have no right to be shocked. For universities themselves are in part responsible for laying the roadbed for coercion. The college president who sadly shakes his head and mumbles that he cannot understand what motivates the protestors is like that kind of parent who, after doing everything possible in a span of two decades to destroy his child's mind, laments to the world that the

source be stopped or diverted, civilization would soon collapse, becoming the object of gang rule, with the most powerful mob finally grabbing control of whatever was left. (Toward this end, campus guerrilla tactics serve not only a precedent, but as practice as well.) If the New Left can obtain the sanction or even the seeming sanction of those who society respects as representing intellectuality, that collapse is all but assured. This is the meaning of the New Left's craving for recognition.

Thus far, official reaction almost always has been not that of open, active support, but that of the accommodating compromise and frozen neutrality of men afraid to move. But whether open support, accomodating compromise, or frozen neutrality, as far as aiding the New Left's power plans, all three do equally well.

If cases of open support can be explained by the sorry fact that in America brutes (men who advocate initiatory force) are hired to teach at universities, what explains the neutrality of professors and administrators who should know better? Modern philosophy. The grab bag of confusion that has produced a crop of students who would rather ravish than reason, is also responsible for officials' "spinelessness," their seeming inability to defend their schools against mindless mobs.

Having enbued their charges with the impossbile doctrines of modern philosophy, academicians are now paralyzed by demands that they practice what they preach. The activists are capitalizing on the fact that most of academia and the culture at large operates on a double standard, explicitly professing one set of convictions, yet living by another, implicitly held, unstated, unidentified frame-of-reference. The reason the New Left has been so successful lies in the exact nature of the dichotomy: the professed ideals (altruism, collectivism, mysticism, "human rights") are impracticable; the true, practicable ideals (egoism, individualism, rationality, individual rights) remain unidentified, used but unacknowledged.

The militants put the ultimatum this way: choose -- choose between what you call ideals and hyprocrisy. To answer such demands would require of officials that they bring into full focus and consciousness those unidentified premises and conduct a total reexamination and revision of their personal convictions, something few adults are willing to do.

Instead, immeshed in profound guilt, most choose to grant concessions, bowing sheepishly to the militants on any issue, no matter how absurd. Their guilt, provocation of which, in part, is the purpose of the Left's continuing ultimatums, has at least two root causes. First, capitulating presidents realize -- no matter how they attempt to blank out the realization -- that they have refused to think about issues important to their psychological and physical well-being, that their consciously held "liberal" convictions are in some way dangerous and impracticable, and responsible for producing, protecting, or aiding the savages ravishing their campuses. Second, because explicit premises hold final power over implicit ones, administrators feel guilt over not fully practicing their "liberal" doctrines, even though at the same time vaguely sensing something at fault with them.

the name, turned control over to the student editorial board, and granted the news owners a yearly allowance of $16,000, to continue for three years, at which time the paper would have to depend on advertising revenue.

Observe the hypocrisy of this arrangement, one designed in a foolhardy attempt to pacify both alumni and militants. The paper still rents office space from the school and is allowed complete distribution privileges. No amount of name-changing and other transparent footwork can change the fact that the administration has merely switched sanctions, and in doing so, revealed profound preoccupation with enhancing appearances rather than substance, preoccupation widespread in the academic community.

As one moves on to other, more "radicalized" schools, B.U.'s fraud begins to pale in comparison.

At NYU, last October, John F. Hatchett, an instructor hired just last summer, was fired after telling 700 students in early October that Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey were "racist bastards." On the 12th, 100 students seized two buildings to force reinstatement. The siege ended when the University agreed to rent Hatchett campus office space and recognize him as a "representative of NYU black students." But, the school emphasized, "he will no longer be speaking as a representative of NYU."

The qualification, of course, is absurd. Since the administration knows Hatchett's ideas, renting him office apace contradicts the implicit purpose of its contention of non-representation. If the university's move meant anything but direct sanction, those 100 students would have been happy housing Hatchett in a nearby office building, rather than on campus.

At Cornell this spring, concessions took on gargantuan proportions. After students who seized a building armed themselves with more than a dozen rifles, Cornell's administration agreed to a provision in which the school would grant amnesty for all involved; drop previous charges arising from earlier "demonstrations"; pay for all damage caused by the seizure; provide students involved with legal aid against any civil suits that might stem from the seizure, and provide a 24-hour guard around the Afro-American Center. After students were disarmed, the agreement was <u>not</u> declared void.

Cornell President James A. Perkins, afraid that if the agreement was subsequently repudiated the militants would simply rearm and reoccupy, explained: "The University can survive, even through concessions obtained through coercion and force, but not through murder." (<u>Time</u>, 2 May 69)

The technique by which the New Left achieves all its victories, including concessions such as those described above, is essentially the same one used to instill administrative guilt: exploitation of the philosophic bridge linking the Left and its opposition.

Their tactics fall into two categories: intimidation and argumentation. Both modes are designed to accomplish the following objectives: exploit confusion, ignorance, dishonesty, fear, and cowardice; demoralize and silence any real opposition; confuse, obscure, and evade actual issues; establish an apparent position of moral

that "rights" are something not to be violated with impunity is one the public holds only through the efforts of men like America's founding fathers, the most explicit capitalists in mankind's history. Yet "rights," in the form of the phoney formula of "student rights," is what the anti-capitalistic New Left crusades for.

Frequently employed is a mixing technique, called "package-dealing," in which a rational idea is welded onto an irrational one, and offered as if a single unit. Many young people are honest enough to see the validity of the rational point -- the wrapping -- but not thoughtful enough to examine the product itself.

Thus a New Left publication will quote from Ibsen's A Doll's House ("Before all else you are a wife and a mother." "That I no longer believe."); recommend The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan; and then go on to blame the mystique on, of all things, capitalism, and offer collectivism as solution to this blatently collectivist error. By the alchemy of package-deals the New Left can substancially weaken the resistance of those who know no means by which to differenciate intellectual food from poison.

But one of the most common ploys is that of arguing in the vaguest terms possible, extruding an enveloping fog of belligerent abiguities in which those "liberals" who hold their convictions as a psychological device to instill a false sense of self-esteem (the kind that might be heard to think: "I'm no bigot. I wouldn't think of pressing charges against blacks who kidnapped the Dean of Students Why, that'd be racism.") can drown any doubts they have that the New Left might not be merely a bunch of misguided idealists. "Peace," screams the militant as he swings his club. "Equality," chants the black racist as he squeezes off a few rounds. "That's what I like to hear," the "liberal" gasps as clubs and bullets strike.

Like men unable to resist disease because they have accepted a dose of anti-rejection serum, those who run America's universities are unable to reject the lethal malady the New Left seeks to spread. And each element of the New Left's program is designed to gain from the inability or unwillingness of administrators to think, to judge, and to act in response to the threat the militants represent.

How an essentially unthinking mob of brutes has managed to create such a massive dent in a well-entrenched intellectual establishment is the story of zero-eat-zero. When groups holding the same basic premises clash, the most consistent must invariably triumph, regardless of the actual validity of the premises involved. That the New Left's "philosophy" (that is, its list of slogans) is in serious contradiction with easily observable facts of reality is not important; its opponents hold the same errors; that is the proverbial foot in the door.

From the hard lines of H. S. Hayakawa to the slippery ooze of James A. Perkins, the only essential difference is in the size of the foot. Even Hayakawa, whose unflinching recourse to cops (and curses) brought quick (if temporary) peace to San Francisco State and won him national recognition, may be heard to speak approvingly of "social consciousness," the New Left's pseudonym for altruistic self-immolation.

°Special complaint contest (for New Yorkers only): For a limited time only we are accepting letters from irate New Yorkers. Do you have a complaint about your city? If the irritant can be easily traced to the misuse of force by the city government, we want to hear about it. We are particularly interested in examples which reveal the fundamental nature and consequence of collectivism; for example: the Seagram building "beauty" tax. Writer of the most original letter will win a year's subscription to REASON (extension of his own or gift). Decision of the judges is final.

°Readers with children will enjoy the cartoon and comic strip work of Steve Ditko, a New York artist. Mr. Ditko produces Mr. A and The Avenging World. Mr. A is a comic strip depicting a newsreporter who destroys criminals. Most interesting here is the philosophic frame-of-reference presented at the beginning of each strip, as well as the dialog, both of which combine to explain the underlying issues (the meaning of money, etc.) with a clarity rare in any art form today. The Avenging World, which is clearly adult fare, depicts by an engaging graphic technique philosophic principles responsible for the state of the world. Neutrality, for example, is revealed for what it is by the visual vehicle of the "neutralist," who looks exactly as one would mentally picture the shape of his soul. Copies of A. W. are available through Witzend, P.O. Box 882, Ansonia Station NYC, 10023. Ask for no. 6 and enclose $1. The address of Mr. A's publisher can be obtained through Mr. Ditko, 276 W. 43rd St., N.Y.C. 10036.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Friedlander:
.....just for the sake of factual reporting, Leslie Fiedler is a "he," not a"she," as misgendered in your [April news and comment].

Your publication is very good. I look forward to receiving it. If I have any other criticism, it is only of a recent [March] editorial comment regarding copyrighted material by [the MBTA]. You answered their objection and warning to the effect that what's public cannot be privately copyrighted, and, therefore, the [MBTA] had no rational right to claim such copyright. Not true -- legally. If legally, it is copyrighted, it is protected -- whether rationally right or not. Your argument -- and answer to [the MBTA] -- was invalid. If a law is wrong, it must be changed through proper, legal procedure, not by force, faith, or "exemption." Such arguments are not only legally invalid, but a contradiction to a rational, civilized philosophy of government.

George Dean
Chicago, Ill.

Do readers agree with Mr. Dean? Mr. Dean's remarks, incidently, are from a long letter concerning the recent "theater for ideas" in New York City and the "Living Theater's"disruption of that meeting (not reported in Time). Mr. Dean is a Chicago playwrite and author.--ED